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### Listing of Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the subject application:

Claim 1 (previously presented): An initialization method comprising:

initializing a phase change optical recording medium with a laser beam with a power density of from 15 to 22 mW/ $\mu\text{m}^2$  at a linear velocity of from 8 to 12 m/s to initialize the phase change optical recording medium, wherein the phase change optical recording medium, wherein the phase change optical recording medium comprises:

a transparent substrate having a guide groove on the surface thereof;

a first protective layer which is overlaid on the transparent substrate;

a recording layer which is overlaid on the first protective layer and which essentially consists of a material which is represented by the following composition formula:

$\text{Ag}\alpha\text{X}\beta\text{Sb}\delta\text{TeeGe}\gamma$ , wherein X is at least one element selected from the group of Ga, In, Tl, Pb, Sn, Bi, Cd, Hg, Mn, Dy, Cu and Au, and  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\epsilon$ , and  $\gamma$  have units of atomic % and satisfy the following relationships:

when  $\alpha = \beta = 0$ ;

$\delta + \epsilon + \gamma = 100$ ;

$60 \leq \delta \leq 80$ ;

$0 \leq \epsilon \leq 30$ , and

$1 \leq \gamma \leq 10$ , and

when at least one of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  is greater than 0;

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$$\alpha + \beta + \delta + e + \gamma = 100,$$

$$5 \leq \alpha + \beta + \gamma \leq 9,$$

$$0 \leq \alpha \leq 2$$

$$0 \leq \beta \leq 8,$$

$$60 \leq \delta \leq 80,$$

$$0 \leq e \leq 30, \text{ and}$$

$$1 \leq \gamma < 9; \text{ and}$$

a second protective layer which is overlaid on the recording layer; and

a reflective layer which is overlaid on the second protective layer,

wherein the phase change optical recording medium further comprises an oxide layer which comprises at least  $\text{ZrO}_2$  and which is located in at least one of a position between the recording layer and the first protective layer and a position between the recording layer and the second protective layer, wherein the oxide layer further comprises at least one of a rare earth oxide and an oxide of a group IIa element exclusive of Be, and wherein a content of said at least one of the rare earth oxide and the oxide of a group IIa element exclusive of Be ranges from 1 to 10 mole % based on  $\text{ZrO}_2$ .

Claim 2 (original): The initialization method according to claim 1, wherein the recording layer has a thickness of from 8 to 20 nm.

Claim 3 (canceled).

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Claim 4 (previously presented): The initialization method according to claim 1, wherein the oxide layer comprises  $\text{ZrO}_2$  as a main component.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The initialization method according to claim 1, wherein the oxide layer comprises a titanium oxide.

Claim 6 (original): The initialization method according to claim 5, wherein the content of the titanium oxide is not greater than 60 mole based on a total amount of materials included in the oxide layer.

Claim 7-8 (canceled).

Claim 9 (previously presented): The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the oxide layer has a thickness of from 1 to 20 nm.

Claim 10 (original): The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the irradiation is performed while the laser beam forms a spot having an area not greater than  $200 \mu\text{m}^2$  on a surface of the recording layer, and wherein a light source of the irradiation laser beam has an output power of from 0.7 to 2.5W.

Claim 11 (original): The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the linear velocity is in a range within + or -2 m/s of a crystallization limit speed of the recording layer.

Claim 12 (original): The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the irradiation is performed while the laser beam forms an oval-shaped spot, wherein the following relationship is satisfied:  $d/n \leq pf \leq d(n-1)/n$ ,

wherein pf represents a feeding pitch of the laser beam, d represents a half width diameter

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of the oval-shaped spot in a longitudinal direction, and  $n$  is an integer of from 2 to 5, and wherein there is no portion in the recording layer which is subject to irradiation multiple times.

Claim 13 (new): The initialization method according to claim 1, wherein the oxide layer has a thickness within a range of 2 to 6 nm.